

~~SECRET~~(b)(1)
(b)(3)
(b)(6)

✓ R122

94 D2 95 Box 7 (16175) Folder: Libreville Xmas Corp 5/1-7/90

Outlook

Doe is almost certain to fall, in our judgment. His growing isolation and the military's glaring deficiencies severely limit chances the President would be able to forestall his own departure through military or political means. We judge that Doe's loyalist forces probably have little prospect of stopping the rebel advance, let alone defeating the rebels militarily. Although the estimated 850 remaining members of the executive mansion guard and the special anti-terrorist unit in Monrovia

APPROVED FOR
RELEASE DATE:
14-Sep-2009

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

probably would be capable of protecting the executive mansion, it is unlikely they could defend the city as well, and they may lack the will to do either. The roughly 200 to 400 other soldiers assigned to guard Monrovia are poorly trained and ill-equipped for urban combat. Nonetheless, Doe has said repeatedly that he is unwilling to seek a political compromise with the rebels; even if he accepts that he has no alternative, we doubt that Taylor would agree to negotiate with him.

We doubt that any domestic player or group will be in a position to promote an orderly transition. Instead, we expect Doe's departure to usher in a period of anarchy and ethnic bloodletting, especially in Monrovia, the duration and severity of which will depend in part on how he leaves power. If Doe goes voluntarily, leaving a senior non-Krahn military officer, such as Defense Minister Barclay, in command, Doe's successors might be able to negotiate with rebel leaders to end the confusion and begin building a coalition government.

Moreover, given the low level of troop morale and discipline, many of the remaining government troops probably would not respond to commands from any new leaders to engage the rebels. If Taylor's forces gained the upper hand, we believe the rebels would indiscriminately begin slaughtering Krahn, seeking retribution for Army atrocities committed against their fellow Gio tribesmen.

How Taylor reacts to emerging circumstances also will play a major part in determining the length and intensity of turbulence in the capital. In our view, the violence after Doe falls, but before a clear successor emerges, would be unlikely to subside quickly, unless Taylor could be persuaded to cooperate with other political groups rather than bidding for sole control by force. The prospects for reaching a compromise would be complicated further if any of the several groups of exiled Liberian dissidents--sensing the end of Doe's rule is at hand--enters the fighting.

Although we cannot rule out Taylor's willingness to negotiate in such circumstances, his statements so far suggest that he is opposed to sharing power with other groups. As a Liberian of American descent, or so-called Americo-Liberian, Taylor probably has few personal supporters and is viewed with suspicion by most indigenous groups. They fear he is using the Gio-Krahn conflict to restore power to the Americo-Liberian minority that ruled Liberia before Doe.

~~SECRET~~

To ensure his takeover or consolidate his control, Taylor may request increased assistance from his Libyan backers. If he believes the rebels will win, Qadhafi probably would be tempted to increase clandestine support even before they reached the capital, perhaps by airlifting supplies if the rebels control Roberts Airfield. If the rebels reach Monrovia and claim power, Qadhafi probably would respond--as he did when Rawlings assumed power in Ghana in 1980--by recognizing Taylor's new government and flying in arms and ammunition to help shore up Taylor's fledgling regime. Qadhafi probably would consider sending Libyan military personnel as advisers and instructors only if he judged that Taylor was firmly in control.

Implications for the United States

The primary threat to American citizens and installations would come from a breakdown in Army discipline and law and order in Monrovia. The potential for such a development will increase substantially if the Army fails to stop the rebels at Buchanan. If the insurgents seize RIA, less than 30 miles from Buchanan, the 5,000-8,000 US citizens remaining in Liberia could be stranded, although most are scattered throughout the countryside where they probably would be at less risk than those in Monrovia.¹ We doubt that either the government or Taylor would deliberately seek to harm US citizens who stay, but Americans could be subjected to unauthorized harassment or caught in a crossfire between rebels and government troops.

As the security situation deteriorates, representatives from both the Liberian Government--such as some members of a delegation due in Washington for talks beginning 7 May--and the Taylor rebel group are likely to appeal to the United States for a public show of support. Doe or the survivors from his regime may plead for US intervention to prevent bloodshed, while the rebels would likely seek US recognition to legitimize their authority over the country. Taylor's political agenda--beyond overthrowing Doe and seizing power for himself--is vague, however. Although Taylor has claimed he would eventually hold elections and restore civilian rule, his sincerity is suspect. Taylor also has tried to dispel concerns that he is anti-US.

¹ As many as several thousand other Liberians may hold dual US citizenship.

~~SECRET~~

Charles Taylor

Charles Taylor--head of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and leader of a more than four-month-old insurgency against the Liberian Government--

Taylor was not thought at the outset of rebel operations in December 1989 to have the necessary military experience to engineer President Doe's overthrow. Several factors--including indiscipline on the part of the Liberian Army, tribal animosities ripe for exploitation, widespread discouragement with Doe's rule, and Taylor's persistence and underestimated leadership skills--have strengthened his prospects. Taylor has claimed he wants to promote democracy and free enterprise, but recent press interviews, as well as his continued involvement with Libya, cast doubt on his intentions.

It is increasingly clear that Taylor is determined to succeed Doe. In January 1990 Taylor stated his objective as "an all-out armed struggle until Doe is removed and a democratically elected government is brought to power, not necessarily headed by me, Charles Taylor." Since then his appetite appears to have grown in proportion to his military successes. Recently, he explained to the international press that the Liberian people had begged him to initiate the coup and would be so grateful for a return to true democracy that they would force him to become leader.

Taylor is not a natural fan of the United States, but probably realizes that maintenance of the historically-close US-Liberian relationship could be crucial to the survival of a fledgling regime under his control. As an advisor to the then-new Doe government in 1980, he promoted a policy of "genuine non-alignment" and threatened on various occasions to strengthen ties to anti-US regimes.

On the other hand, in recent months Taylor has avoided anti-US statements and appears to be going out of his way to assure goodwill towards the United States: "Americans are decent people, they are our friends... We intend having good relationships," he has said.

Born in southwestern Liberia, Taylor is an Americo-Liberian, descended from freed US slaves who established Liberia in the 19th century. He lived in the United States in the 1970s--possibly earning a master's degree in economics--and subsequently went into the import-export business near Boston. Returning to Liberia to accept a post in the Doe government, Taylor was cashiered in 1983 for alleged large-scale theft of government funds and coup plotting. Having fled to the United States, he was arrested at Monrovia's request but later escaped from jail--

~~SECRET~~

US warrant for his arrest is still active. He returned to Africa, where he became involved in dissident activity. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

~~SECRET~~